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SUBJECT: BEIJING AND THE DALAI LAMA'S TAIWAN VISIT

REF: A. TAIPEI 1076  
[1](#)B. TAIPEI 1070

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson.  
Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: China has made two public statements on the Dalai Lama's ongoing Taiwan visit; the first condemning the trip but blaming it on Taiwan's opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the second warning that that the visit is "bound to affect cross-Straits relations." Repercussions so far have been fairly minor, involving cancellations or delays of some official visits. A PRC Taiwan Affairs Office official told PolOff that cross-Straits relations are too important to "let any one person disrupt them," but also noted that China's reaction depends on the Dalai Lama, and he is still in Taiwan. Separately, a Chinese academic told PolOff that he expects no significant impact from the visit. Comment: So far, Beijing appears to be seeking a way to express displeasure about the Dalai Lama's Taiwan visit without imperiling the broadly positive trend of cross-Straits relations it has developed with President Ma. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (C) The State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) spokesperson has made two statements on the ongoing Dalai Lama visit to Taiwan. The first, on August 27, blamed the DPP entirely for the visit, not mentioning President Ma's approval of the trip. The second statement, on August 30, expressed "clear and firm" opposition to the trip and said it was "bound to affect cross-Straits relations." TAO International Affairs Office Deputy Director Li Li told PolOff that while the PRC was taking steps to "make clear its attitude," cross-Straits relations were too important to "let any one person disrupt them." Explaining China's position, Li said that the Dalai Lama was "a separatist in religious garb," and so the PRC consistently opposed his international travels. Further, the objectives of this trip "are not pure," but rather reflect efforts by the DPP to pressure Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou and gain an advantage before the November local elections in Taiwan. Li added that "in his personal analysis," the invitation had been made by the mayor of Kaohsiung "in an effort to consolidate her position."

[1](#)3. (C) Asked to explain the TAO spokesperson's statement on the visit's effect on cross-Straits relations, Li said that President Ma's approval of the visit would "injure mutual trust" between PRC and Taiwan officials. China was "watching the trend" of cross-Straits relations and deciding its next steps. The level of PRC concern depended on the Dalai Lama's activities, "and he is still in Taiwan." Beijing had not officially tied any measures to the Dalai Lama's visit so far, but press reports noted the cancellation of ceremonies in China to mark the inauguration of regularly scheduled cross-Straits flights on August 31 (the flights themselves continue), of PRC participation in the opening ceremony of the Deaflympics in Taipei September 5, and of the TAO Chairman's participation in "Taiwan Week" in northeast China's Liaoning province, as well as a one-week delay in the

visit of a delegation of mainland bankers led by People's Bank of China.

14. (C) China Academy of Social Sciences Professor Tao Wenzhao told PolOff he expected no significant impact from the visit.

Tao noted that in fall 2008, China had not allowed the U.S. announcement of arms sales to delay Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) President Chen Yunlin's November visit to Taiwan. Similarly, Beijing University Professor Yu Wanli told us he believed the PRC needed to show sufficient disapproval to satisfy public opinion, but did not want to disrupt improving cross-Strait ties.

HUNTSMAN